



2/27/2023

REPRESENTATIVE SANDRA FEIST
DISTRICT 39B
409 STATE OFFICE BUILDING
ST PAUL, MN 55155

RE: EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FOR **HF 1712**

Dear Representative Feist,

Banyan is a community development organization whose mission is to develop youth, strengthen families, and create community in the Phillips neighborhood of south Minneapolis. Banyan offers youth programming year-round to address inequities in academic opportunities that disproportionately impact low-income students and particularly students of color. Parents are drawn to Banyan because we are viewed as a safe place where their children can grow and thrive. To further support and reinforce youth development, parents receive adult education programming to elevate their knowledge and confidence, while community outreach and gatherings strengthen the neighborhood by building trust and connection.

We wholeheartedly support **HF 1712** to continue to provide funding to support the youth of Minnesota. This funding is especially important now as we increase social and emotional support for our youth and resources for families after two years of disruption and unrest. For many youth, these unprecedented challenges have resulted in mental health impacts, learning loss, and high incidences of anxiety and depression. Additionally, increased community violence and social injustice amplified the emotional toll. We've been able to work with our youth in navigating the emergence of interpersonal relationships again, increasing focus and time for homework help and study skills, and social and emotional learning, but more support is needed.

Our youth are resilient and adapting, however, as we intensify our programming support for youth, the need for additional funding is necessary for us to be successful. Next fall, we will have about 170 youth and 100 families participating in our programs. Our youth attend after school and summer programming and enrichment to help close the opportunity gap and enhance social and emotional skills. Our families are strengthened by bringing parents and children together and by helping parents advocate for their children. Banyan youth thrive and ultimately succeed as adults because whole families and the larger community become connected and engaged. All our year-round wrap-around support services are provided at no cost to families, which is why **HF 1712** is vitally needed to continue to grow and support the work of organizations like ours.

Thank you for your support of our youth and for sponsoring this bill. If you have any questions, please contact me at any time at 612-722-8512 or carl@banyancommunity.org.

Sincerely,

Carl Schlueter / Executive Director